

+ N^o 2
The Danger of falling from GRACE.

Set forth in a

FAREWELL SERMON

PREACHED AT

E A L I N G,

In Middlesex,

On SUNDAY the 28th of *September*, 1729.

By *ROBERT PALMER*, D.D.

Lecturer of the said Parish.

Published at the Request of several of the Principal Inhabitants
that heard it.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. WOTTON, at the *Queen's-Head* and
Three Daggers in *Fleet-street*.

MDCCLXXX.





T O M Y
Much-Respected Friends,
T H E
I N H A B I T A N T S of the Parish
of E A L I N G.

Gentlemen,

THIS Discourse was never intended for the Press, and I am sensible of many Defects to go along with it, yet the many and great Favours I have receiv'd from you, and the particular Candour with which you heard it; and which, I am persuaded, will accompany your reading it, have prevailed upon me to comply with your Request in printing it. And I have been the rather induced to follow your Judgment than my own in this particular, as you were pleas'd to think it might be more useful, if it was to come into the hands of those (for whom my hearty Desire to God is, that they may be saved) whereby they might have an opportunity of considering it better than they possibly could do in a transient

transient Hearing. And if by reading it at their leisure, and weighing it more fully than otherwise they would do, it should happily prove a means under God of strengthning and confirming any in the Ways of Righteousness, it will then obtain the End for which you desired its Publication, and which would not have been decent for me to have denied.

Upon this Motive I have ventured to offer it to You with all its Imperfections, and wou'd willingly hope, that it will not forfeit, upon the Reading, that good Opinion, which you were pleas'd to entertain of it upon the Preaching. However, it is a sufficient Satisfaction to me, that you have judg'd it worthy your Perusal; and every ingenuous Reader will allow, that I must have been wanting in my Duty to those, who were so many Years under my Care, if at parting I had let go any Opportunity of benefiting their Souls: Which that this Discourse may do, and that it may answer the pious Ends, for which you desired it might appear in the world, is the hearty Prayer of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your Most Affectionate Friend,

and Obliged Humble Servant,

ROBERT PALMER.



EZEKIEL XVIIIth Chap. 24th Ver.

But when the Righteous turneth away from his Righteousness and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations that the wicked Man doth, shall he live? All his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, in his Trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.



THE Prophet *Ezekiel* in some Verses preceding my Text, is vindicating God from the Imputation of Injustice, in laying the Punishment of the Fathers Sins upon their innocent Children; and in order to this, declares peremptorily in the Name of God, *the Soul that sinneth, it shall die; that the Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, neither shall the*

B

Fa-

The Danger of

Father bear the Iniquity of the Son; the Righteousness of the Righteous shall be upon him, and the Wickedness of the Wicked shall be upon him, ver. 20. But then immediately, that he might be encouraged to repent, the Prophet assures him, that if he will turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all the Statutes of God, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. And that the Righteous, on the other hand, might not presume too much upon his Righteousness, and think it impossible ever to lose God's Favour, and Life eternal, the Prophet declares to him no less plainly, that when he turneth away from his Righteousness, and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations that the Wicked doth, he shall not live: All his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, in his Trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. ver. 24.

Wherefore in these Words is contained, you see, one necessary Qualification of our Obedience, to make it acceptable to God, *namely*, that it be lasting and persevering, that we live and die in it. For it is declared, that *whenever the righteous Man*, i. e. one who lives in Obedience to the Commands of God, and in the general Course of a good Life, and by so doing is in a State of Grace and Favour with God, *when* such an one shall fall off from his Righteousness, and go into any wicked

falling from GRACE.

3

wicked Course, he shall certainly *die in his Iniquity*, as other wicked Men do. The Goodness of his former Life shall avail him nothing: it shall not be remembered to his advantage at that day, when he must give an account of himself to God. He can continue no longer in God's favour, than he continues in Obedience to him; and when he falls from the one, he falls at the same time, and by the same means, from the other also: So that how good soever he had been formerly, and how much soever he had wrought Righteousness, he shall not be at all the better for it, unless his *Lord, when he cometh, shall find him so doing.*

But before I proceed to make good this, which the Text expressly declares to us, I think it will not be improper to remark one thing as evidently implied in it, *namely*, that it is possible for a *righteous Man*, i. e. one in a State of Holiness and Acceptance with God, to fall away from that State, and continue impenitent to the last, and finally miss of his Salvation. For the Prophet's Threatning, that if *the righteous Man* falls off from his *Righteousness*, he shall perish in it, does manifestly contain this Implication, that it is possible for him to fall from it. For if such a Case was not possible, we can't imagine the Prophet would suppose it, and make such a solemn Declaration as he here does, concerning the final State and Condition of those

The Danger of

to whom it should happen. And 'tis in vain to pretend, that such Persons, to whom this *falling away* is supposed to happen, had not received true Grace, and were never in a State of Acceptance and Justification : for they are not only called *the Righteous*, but in that it is declared of them, that because of their *turning from their Righteousness, they shall surely die*, it is plainly supposed, that if they had not *turned from it*, but persevered in it, they should have lived.

But it may perhaps be objected, that though under the Dispensation of the Law, when the Prophet made this Declaration, a Man might fall from a State of Grace and Justification ; yet it is otherwise under the Dispensation of the Gospel and the Christian Covenant : That it is the Nature and Constitution of this Covenant, that a State of Holiness and Acceptance with God, when once attained to, can never be lost ; that the Grace of God is now more powerful upon the Hearts of Men to keep them from falling from him ; and that the Prayers of Christ in Heaven, *where he for ever liveth to make Intercession for us, that our Faith may not fail*, cannot miss of their Effect : And therefore, tho' it were true that a perfectly *righteous Man*, and one who had attained to a State of Grace and true Holiness under the Law, might fall from that State, it will not follow from hence, that he may do so under the Gospel also.

Now

Now in answer to this, it need not be disputed how great advantages we Christians have of persevering in Goodness, above the Jews, upon the account of the more plentiful Effusions of God's Grace, and Christ's Intercession in Heaven for us. We do readily allow, that upon these accounts, as well as others, our Continuance in Well-doing, and Perseverance in true Holiness is more easy to us, than theirs was to them. But this does not come up to the Point in question, which is not whether the Means and Advantages of Perseverance, under the Covenant of the Gospel, are more strong and efficacious than those under the Law, but whether they are such as cannot possibly fail of that Effect; which no body, I think, who is conversant in Scripture or in History, will assert. Even the Grace of God, as powerful as it is under the Gospel-Dispensation, may be resisted and rendered ineffectual through the Perverseness and Obstinacy of Men: And as for the Intercession of Christ in Heaven, that too may be in vain, through their carelessness, and their not concurring with that Grace which he obtains for them. In short, Men if they please may disappoint and frustrate the most powerful Means that God has instituted for their Salvation; and it is true in a christian, what was at first said in a moral Sense only, that God has provided no Remedy for their Obstinacy.

The Danger of

I confess, indeed, the Grace of God may be more easily resisted before a Man is brought over from a Life of Sin, than afterwards, when he has entred upon a religious Course ; and the longer he has continued in such a Course, the more likely will he be to persevere in it. But notwithstanding this, there is no absolute Certainty of his Perseverance whilst he lives in this World. The Apostle St. *Paul* himself had not surely this absolute Certainty of his Perseverance, and final Salvation, when he speaks thus of himself ; *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Castaway.* 1 Cor. ch. 9. ver. 27. The Apostle, at the time he thus spake, will be allowed, I presume, to be in a regenerate State, and entitled to Salvation ; yet he was not, you see, absolutely and infallibly certain of it for all that. He very well knew he was not as yet out of the Power and Reach of all Temptation, nor ever should be, while he continued in this World. He might be brought, for ought he knew, to deny his Master, or to do many things contrary to his Will ; so that he found himself obliged to watch and fast, to *keep under his Body, and bring it into Subjection* ; to practise great Severities upon himself, lest through the Allurements of the World, or yet greater Difficulties to be withstood, the Persecutions of it for *Righteousness sake*, he should be drawn from his Duty

falling from GRACE.

7

Duty, and finally miscarry. And if so great an Apostle was not absolutely sure of his persevering, but might possibly miss of his Salvation, we cannot wonder he should write to other Christians in such a manner, as plainly supposes, that they too, even the best of them, might miscarry.

This inspired Author to the *Hebrews* observes, (Heb. 6. ver. 4, 5.) *It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, by which is signified the Gospel-Age, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance:* Which evidently supposes, that those here described, (and by the Description of them, it plainly appears they were in a State of Grace and Acceptance) might *fall away*, and that finally, so as never afterwards to be recovered. And is not the same implied in those frequent Exhortations we meet with in the Gospel, to *Perseverance in the Grace of God?* which would be extremely improper, not to say unbecoming the Spirit of Wisdom, if Men could not fall from that Grace; and if it really was, as some pretend it is, the very Nature and Constitution of the Gospel-Covenant, that none who have once attained to Grace, and are in a State of Salvation, can possibly miss of it.

I

And

The Danger of

And now having settled this Point, that it is possible for a *righteous Man*, in the Words of the Prophet, to fall *from his Righteousness, and commit Iniquity, and do according to all the Abominations that the wicked Man doth*; I shall proceed to a second:

2. Which is to shew the Danger and fatal Consequences of such Apostacy and Relapse: and these are, the certain Loss of the Favour of God, and eternal Damnation; so that let his Righteousness heretofore have been what it will, let his Obedience have been ever so exact, let him have done ever so much in God's Service, it will be of no account in the sight of God, nor contribute any thing to his Salvation.

For if we consider the Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, we shall find them to be these, that God will bestow upon us eternal Happiness and Salvation, provided we yield Obedience to his Laws, and continue the same all the Days of our Lives. *If ye continue in my Word*, says our Saviour to those *Jews which believed on him*, constantly practise my Commands, *then are e my Disciples indeed*, (John 8. 31.) And St. Paul tells us, we must *by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory and Immortality*, if we desire to inherit *eternal Life*, Rom. 2. 7. And the same Apostle assures us in the Name of God, that if *any Man draw back, his*
Soul

falling from GRACE.

9

Soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb. 10. 38. Which is a figurative way of Expression, and imports thus much, that a Man by falling off from his Obedience to the Laws of God, not only forfeits his Favour, but incurs his highest Displeasure likewise, and makes himself liable to all the sad Effects of it. And the same is implied in that Exhortation of the Spirit of God to the *Angel or Bishop of the Church in Smyrna*, Rev. 2. part of ver. 10. *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life:* For in this Affirmative, the Negative is included and supposed, that he will not give the Crown of Life, to those who are not faithful unto Death.

There is an excellent and lively Representation of the desperateness of the Condition of those Men, who fall off from Goodness, given us by our blessed Saviour in the Parable of the ten Virgins. *There were ten Virgins took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, and five of them were wise, and five of them were foolish, Mat. 25. v. 1, 2.* Even the foolish Virgins had their Lamps once lighted, by which is meant, they had made a solemn Profession of Faith in Baptism, and brought forth Fruits answerable to it, by living in the Exercise of all those Virtues and Graces to which that Profession obliges them. But their Lamps, it seems, went out before the Bridegroom's coming. They either de-

C

fected

serted their Profession, or lived in a manner unfuitable to it, and let go all their former Goodness, and the Consequence of this was, they were shut out with this afflicting Sentence, *I know you not*, ver. 12. As our Blessed Saviour has fram'd this Parable, it is contriv'd, you see, as much to the advantage of the foolish Virgins as can well be: for it represents them to have had their *Lamps burning for a long time*, *i. e.* to have liv'd suitably to their Profession, tho' not to the end, yet very near it, and to be shut out for no other reason, but for want of continuing constant in it a little longer.

By this we are sufficiently instructed, that those, who having once trodden in the ways of Godliness, shall afterwards forsake them, will not be at all advantaged by their former Godliness, but shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven as certainly as those who have never known or walked in them. Nay, shou'd I say that their former Goodness will be so far from pleading their Excuse, and mitigating their Punishment, that it will rather aggravate their Crime, and increase their Condemnation, I shou'd say no more than what the Scriptures themselves teach us: St. Peter declares very plainly, that if *after Men have escaped the Pollutions of the World, thro' the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end*

falling from GRACE.

II

is worse with them than the beginning. Much better had it been for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them, 2 Pet. 2. v. 20, 21. They by deserting their former Goodness will be disposed to fall into greater Wickedness, and bring upon themselves a greater degree of Guilt, and by consequence a more heavy and severer Punishment.

Having thus briefly shewn, that *when* any Person turns from his Righteousness, and committeth Iniquity, he does thereby incur the loss of God's Favour and eternal Damnation; and that *all his Righteousness he hath done shall not be mentioned*, or be of any avail to save him from the Punishment due to such Apostacy, it may be proper,

3. To shew in the third place, the Justice of Almighty God in thus proceeding with him.

And that I think will appear very evident, if we consider what it is to apostatize from Goodness; it is to be sorry for it, and to repent of it. And when Men repent of their being good, it is but just that Almighty God shou'd repent likewise of that Good he design'd for them. As on the one hand God has promis'd to bestow Life and eternal Happiness upon

all such as repent them truly of their former Sins, and turn to him ; so on the other, he has threatned Death and final Destruction to all that turn away from him ; and there is in truth the same Justice and Equity in both Cases : For as a Man's Amendment and Reformation is a kind of undoing all he had done amiss before, and God is pleased in his Grace and Goodness to accept of it as such ; so is his Degeneracy and Apostacy a kind of undoing all he had done well before, and God will so esteem of it. It is to renounce his former Goodness ; and can we think fit that God should reward Men for that which they have renounced, and repent themselves that they had ever done ?

Besides, 'tis impossible in the nature of the thing, that one who has revolted, and died in a State of Apostacy from God, shou'd ever be happy in another World. So that if we cou'd suppose such an one to be taken into Heaven, it wou'd not be Heaven to him, but a most melancholy and disconsolate Place ; because he carries along with him such a frame and disposition of mind, as makes him incapable of enjoying that in which the Happiness of Heaven does consist.

'Tis certain there can be no Happiness in another World, without a likeness to God in the temper and disposition of our minds ; for Happiness *there* consists in the enjoying God, which none can do, that are

are not *Partakers of the divine Nature* to a certain degree ; not those, we may be sure, that leave this World, and are translated into another in so great a Depravation of Mind, and such a monstrous Alienation from God and Goodness, as Apostacy supposes, or does necessarily produce. 'Tis therefore impossible to suppose, that a Man dying in a wicked State shall be receiv'd into Heaven for his former Righteousness, because by dying in that State, he makes himself unfit for it. He is not so much excluded from Happiness by the Terms and Conditions of the Gospel-Covenant, as he excludes himself from it, by rendering himself incapable of it by his Sin and Folly. God does not make any miserable that can be happy. If any Man turns to God he shall be happy, because by such a Change he makes himself capable of being so : But he who turns from him, and falls from a course of Goodness into a course of Sin, and dies in it, must be miserable for ever ; because he has lost those virtuous and holy Dispositions, which are necessary to make him happy. For tho' all the Glories of the other World were let in upon him, he cou'd not be the happier for them, because the State of his Soul is such, as makes him incapable of receiving them.

'Tis therefore just and reasonable, and even necessary, that good and righteous Men, when they forsake their *Righteousness, and commit Iniquity, and*
do

do according to all the Abominations that the wicked do, shou'd have the Fate and Condemnation of the Wicked ; nor can it seem harsh and unreasonable, that their Condemnation shou'd be so much the greater, to those who consider the great Mischief that is done to Religion by their Back-sliding and Apostacy.

There is nothing so much disparages and reflects upon Religion, nothing so much discourages Men from the Practice of it, as to see those who were formerly eminent and exemplary in Goodness to fall off from it. The Example of such Men is much more fatal and pernicious, than of those who have been wicked all their Lives long. It makes Men inclined to think they have tried Religion, and don't like it, and have not found that high Pleasure and Satisfaction in it, which Men are taught to expect from it ; which is to give a most wretched Character of Religion, as failing upon Tryal and Experiment, and lay in the ways of Men a mighty Discouragement to undertake it. Since therefore the *falling away* of good Men brings such a Scandal and Discredit upon Religion, and is of such bad Influence towards the discouraging others from pursuing it, it very well deserves to have a severer Punishment inflicted on it. And I may also add, that those who have once apostatized from Goodness, are observed
for

for the most part to grow more obstinately and desperately wicked than other People, and upon that account also a more dreadful Condemnation is due to them.

Thus I have shewn that it is possible for one in a State of Grace to fall away from that State ; and made it appear, that the certain Consequence of such *falling away* will be his eternal Condemnation, and vindicated the Justice of Almighty God in thus dealing with him.

Give me leave now to make a proper Application of the foregoing Considerations, and so conclude. And,

I. The Consideration of the Possibility of falling from Grace may help to check a vain and presumptuous Thought which is apt to arise in the Minds of some People, that as they apprehend themselves to be at present in a State of Grace, they cannot fall from it, and miss of their Salvation. This, as I said, is a vain and presumptuous Thought, and proves oftentimes of very pernicious Consequence. For the very Imagination that they cannot fall, is the Occasion of their falling, by tempting them to neglect themselves, to lay aside their Care and Watchfulness, and expose themselves to Dangers and Temptations which prove too hard for them.

2. Another Use which I would make of the foregoing Considerations concerning the Danger and fatal Consequences of Mens turning away from God, is to excite their Care and Diligence, to watch against all degrees of Apostacy, and whatever approaches near, or has any tendency towards it. It is not usual for Men to relapse from a course of Goodness into a quite contrary one, at once and on a sudden. They do not commonly fall from Grace any more than they attain to it in an Instant. But we may observe them for the most part to degenerate insensibly, to fall away from one degree of Goodness after another, till they go over at last to the side of Vice, and become as corrupt and wicked as any others are. And if this be the way by which Men generally fall from Goodness, then it concerns them mightily to look well to their Doings, and not suffer themselves to go backwards so much as one step in the ways of Virtue and Religion, which may be very hazardous to their Souls, and end fatally.

For when Men once go backwards in the business of Religion, no one can tell where they may be able to make a stand. It will be natural for them to become every day worse and worse, to be led on imperceptibly from one length of Wickedness to another, till they become totally degenerate, and fitted for Destruction.

Let

Let us then, *my Beloved*, take heed to our ways, and use our utmost Diligence not to decline in our spiritual State and Condition ; but as far as may be, to *grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. If we find in ourselves any Abatement of our Affections towards God, if we find our good and holy Resolutions beginning to decay, if we perceive ourselves to grow more negligent of any Duty, and more careless and remiss in any of the Offices of Religion ; we are then certainly in a relapsing State, and have need to double our Diligence, that we may recover, and renew in ourselves whatever has been thus, by the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by our own carnal Will and Frailness, decay'd in us ; left by neglecting ourselves, and degenerating more and more, we come at last to settle in a State of Wickedness, and to be *hardned thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin*, and so forfeit the Recompence of all our former Goodness.

To prevent which, let me intreat you, *Brethren*, to call to mind all those Dissuasives from Sin and Wickedness, all those Exhortations to Piety and Goodness, which I have thro' the Course of my Ministry with you, with less Art and Eloquence, but great Faithfulness and Truth, laid plain before you. As it is the Duty of those who are entrusted with the Word and Sacraments, to represent to Men the whole Will and Counsel of God, to point out to them the strait Paths in which they shou'd go, and the crooked

ones which they shou'd avoid ; so it has been my particular Care and Endeavour to instruct you in every thing relating to the Kingdom of Heaven, to keep back nothing from you that might be profitable for *Doctrines, for Reproof, for Correction and Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnish'd to every good Word and Work.*

^ The Word which I have found in the Book of God, that Word I have always preach'd unto you ; and I do now once more in God's Name declare it unto you, to wit, That if Sinners do not *turn from their evil ways, they shall surely die in their Iniquities :* the Sword of God's Vengeance will one day come upon them, and their Blood shall be upon their own heads ; but that even now if they return from their Sins, and henceforward *do that which is lawful and right, they shall surely live, they shall not die.*

Let this last, this hearty and undissembled Declaration of one who has a real Concern for your Souls, and who hath had as many Testimonies as he could expect, more than he could claim of your Good-will to him, prevail upon you to live as becometh those who are the *Redeemed of the Lord, to have your Conversation according to his Gospel,* and make you fruitful in all the Works of Righteousness. As to those who have long trodden the Paths of Virtue and Holiness, and have *walked in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless,* many of whom I with pleasure observe to be here present, I earnestly beseech

beseech all such for their own sakes, and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his Life that he might *redeem us, and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of Good Works*, not to depart from the good way in which they have walked, but to go on cheerfully and steadily in all the Paths of Virtue and Righteousness, *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressing towards the Mark for the Prize of their high Calling of God in Christ Jesus, till they come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.*

You have heard from God's own mouth, and I repeat it again to you, that if the *Righteous turn away from his Righteousness, he shall not live*; and our Saviour himself has plainly told you, *no Man having put his hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of Heaven*; beware therefore of every Temptation that may allure or withdraw you from your Duty, and consider the great Reward promised to such, and such only who continue faithful unto Death.

You are well apprized of the unhappy Fate of the foolish Virgins, whose Oil was all expended before the *Bridegroom's coming*; let it be your great Care to have your *Lamps* always *burning*, to be in a constant readiness to meet your Lord at what Hour soever he shall come; and by that habitual Preparation for Death, not to lose the Recompence of a well-spent Life.

Many

Many of you, I am sensible, make it your study to walk in all well-pleasing before the Lord, and to pursue those things that are good and acceptable in his sight, and which make for your *everlasting Peace*. Let me therefore beseech you, *by the Mercies of God in Christ Jesus*, to hold fast the Profession of your Faith, and Integrity to the end, and not suffer yourselves to grow *faint or weary in well-doing*, and thereby forfeit the Reward of all your good Actions, for lack of Constancy and Perseverance in them: but as the Apostle exhorts, with which I shall conclude, *by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality*.

And now, Brethren, *I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up*, to establish, strengthen, settle you in every good Word and Work, that at the end of your Days you may attain the End of your Hopes, even the Salvation of your precious and immortal Souls.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the Sake, and thro' the Intercession of Christ Jesus, our only Saviour and Redeemer. To whom with the Father and the Blessed Spirit, three Persons, but one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

Let us then, *my Beloved*, take heed to our ways, and use our utmost Diligence not to decline in our spiritual State and Condition ; but as far as may be, to *grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. If we find in ourselves any Abatement of our Affections towards God, if we find our good and holy Resolutions beginning to decay, if we perceive ourselves to grow more negligent of any Duty, and more careless and remiss in any of the Offices of Religion ; we are then certainly in a relapsing State, and have need to double our Diligence, that we may recover, and renew in ourselves whatever has been thus, by the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by our own carnal Will and Frailness, decay'd in us ; lest by neglecting ourselves, and degenerating more and more, we come at last to settle in a State of Wickedness, and to be *hardned thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin*, and so forfeit the Recompence of all our former Goodness.

To prevent which, let me intreat you, *Brethren*, to call to mind all those Dissuasives from Sin and Wickedness, all those Exhortations to Piety and Goodness, which I have thro' the Course of my Ministry with you, with less Art and Eloquence, but great Faithfulness and Truth, laid plain before you. As it is the Duty of those who are entrusted with the Word and Sacraments, to represent to Men the whole Will and Counsel of God, to point out to them the strait Paths in which they shou'd go, and the crooked

ones which they shou'd avoid ; so it has been my particular Care and Endeavour to instruct you in every thing relating to the Kingdom of Heaven, to keep back nothing from you that might be profitable for *Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction and Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnish'd to every good Word and Work.*

The Word which I have found in the Book of God, that Word I have always preach'd unto you ; and I do now once more in God's Name declare it unto you, to wit, That if Sinners do not *turn from their evil ways, they shall surely die in their Iniquities* : the Sword of God's Vengeance will one day come upon them, and their Blood shall be upon their own heads ; but that even now if they return from their Sins, and henceforward *do that which is lawful and right, they shall surely live, they shall not die.*

Let this last, this hearty and undissembled Declaration of one who has a real Concern for your Souls, and who hath had as many Testimonies as he could expect, more than he could claim of your Good-will to him, prevail upon you to live as becometh those who are the *Redeemed of the Lord, to have your Conversation according to his Gospel*, and make you fruitful in all the Works of Righteousness. As to those who have long trodden the Paths of Virtue and Holiness, and have *walked in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless*, many of whom I with pleasure observe to be here present, I earnestly beseech

falling from GRACE.

19

befeech all fuch for their own fakes, and for the fake of our Lord Jefus Chrift, who laid down his Life that he might *redeem us, and purify to himfelf a peculiar People zealous of Good Works*, not to depart from the good way in which they have walked, but to go on chearfully and fteadily in all the Paths of Virtue and Righteoufnefs, *forgetting thofe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thofe things which are before, preffing towards the Mark for the Prize of their high Calling of God in Chrift Jefus, till they come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect Man, unto the meafure of the Stature of the Fulnefs of Chrift.*

You have heard from God's own mouth, and I repeat it again to you, that if the *Righteous turn away from his Righteoufnefs, he fhall not live*; and our Saviour himfelf has plainly told you, *no Man having put his hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of Heaven*; beware therefore of every Temptation that may allure or withdraw you from your Duty, and confider the great Reward promifed to fuch, and fuch only who continue faithful unto Death.

You are well apprized of the unhappy Fate of the foolifh Virgins, whofe Oil was all expended before the *Bridegroom's coming*; let it be your great Care to have your *Lamps* always *burning*, to be in a conftant readinefs to meet your Lord at what Hour foever he fhall come; and by that habitual Preparation for Death, not to lofe the Recompence of a well-fpent Life.

Many

The Danger, &c.

Many of you, I am sensible, make it your study to walk in all well-pleasing before the Lord, and to pursue those things that are good and acceptable in his sight, and which make for your *everlasting Peace*. Let me therefore beseech you, *by the Mercies of God in Christ Jesus*, to hold fast the Profession of your Faith, and Integrity to the end, and not suffer yourselves to grow *faint or weary in well-doing*, and thereby forfeit the Reward of all your good Actions, for lack of Constancy and Perseverance in them: but as the Apostle exhorts, with which I shall conclude, *by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality*.

And now, Brethren, *I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, to establish, strengthen, settle you in every good Word and Work, that at the end of your Days you may attain the End of your Hopes, even the Salvation of your precious and immortal Souls*.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the Sake, and thro' the Intercession of Christ Jesus, our only Saviour and Redeemer. To whom with the Father and the Blessed Spirit, three Persons, but one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.